

Moving experience



With an output of 45,300 semi-trailers and bodies in 2013–14, Schmitz Cargobull is one of the big players. Steve Banner looks at its technologies

Trailers may look similar, but what tells them apart is all about innovation, engineering design and manufacture. So Schmitz Cargobull's major investment in production equipment at its Altenberge plant makes the German trailer maker worth attention. Even more so, given that its €30 million (£24m) spending spree – particularly for chassis I-beam production – will improve quality and reduce assembly time.

"The beam is now cold-formed on a 16m line from a blank without a welding seam," explains chairman Ulrich Schumer. As a result, it now takes only five minutes to produce a pair of I-beams, as opposed conventionally to 30 minutes. Eliminating welding also reduces steel stresses and helps to ensure more consistent product quality.

Schumer says the new approach will account for three-quarters of its output by early next year – with old and new I-beam lines initially operating in parallel. And he explains that the rest of the galvanised chassis will still be bolted together and backed by the firm's 10-year corrosion warranty.

In Europe, cold-formed I-beams will make an early appearance on Schmitz's new S.CS Genios curtainsider, debuting at the IAA Hanover commercial vehicle show. This new semi-trailer will also be available with an aerodynamic rear 'boat tail' extension, claimed to cut fuel consumption by up to 3%, and folding away for loading and unloading. For operators wanting overhead access, it will also have what Schmitz calls a safety roof. Using a reinforced tarpaulin, it has been upgraded to minimise stress on the roof beam, while also strengthening the body.

Other points of note include an aluminium bulkhead built to an established design, but now with rolled corner stanchions intended to improve stability and strength. The redesigned sliding post has a two-point mounting

that makes it easier and safer to move and position, says the manufacturer, while the manual roof-lifting system is protected in a profile on the rear wall's corner support.

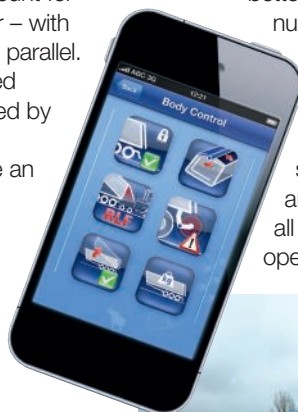
It's all part of Schmitz Cargobull's pragmatic approach to manufacturing in-house, which even extends to axles (in the form of its Rotos, now chosen by 90% of operators) – although here it also allows hauliers to specify third party alternatives.

In-house developments

Other in-house developments now include the D.ZV roof-mounted evaporator for multi-temperature reefers, with the fridge unit now available on its TK.M One, launched last year. It has also introduced a blue anti-slip film for floors and a PIEK-certified, longitudinally-grooved, quiet-running floor. Why these developments? Noise generated by wheeled containers is now well below the 60dB limit, and Schmitz claims a 5% weight advantage, compared with conventional quiet floors.

Incidentally, some UK hauliers will like the latest version of the S.KO folding-wall box semi-trailer. It gives a box body some of the ease of access afforded by a curtainsider, while providing better cargo security and protection. Though only sold in small numbers over here, such trailers are remarkably versatile – an important consideration given that Schmitz is talking about price increases of 3%, due to material costs.

Finally, it's not just about chassis and body engineering and production methods. Turning to tippers, the firm's steel-bodied S.KI Light tipping body now has smartphone and tablet apps to control and monitor certain functions. It's all about improving safety, with the new apps designed to operate the electric roller tarpaulin, fold away the rear under-run guard and control both a new hydraulic tailgate and its i-Level electronically-operated pneumatic suspension. In addition, they can warn the driver if the body is raised while the trailer is in motion and if it exceeds a tilt angle when discharging cargo. **TE**



Smartphone and tablet apps can now control tipping functions